Company News

Picogiga anticipates strong growth in 1998 after transition year

LEADING merchant vendor of GaAs and InP molecular beam epitaxy (MBE) epi wafers Picogiga posted turnover of FF59.6 million (US$10 million) in 1997, a 6.8% increase on a year earlier.

The French-based company described it as a year of transition, that included the construction of a larger facility, that puts the company in position for strong growth in 1998. Construction costs for the new plant, together with an increase in R&D spending from 10-18% of total expenditure, saw the net profit fall 25% to FF3 million.

Picogiga chairman Linh T. Nuyen anticipates a significant increase in revenues during 1998 driven by growth in the markets for cellular phones and low earth satellites. "For a long period of time, Picogiga has been active in space applications," he says. "What is new is the recent emergence of microprocessors based on GaAs for use in constellations of low earth orbit satellites. After a long period of development, microprocessors based on GaAs are now seeing applications in this field: using seven times less power than Si and being more resistant to cosmic radiation, these microprocessors excel in space applications. For Picogiga, it is a new product with a great potential and the result of many years of effort in cooperation with one of the world's largest electronic companies."

Picogiga is pursuing other R&D programmes, especially its GaAs/Si 'symbiosis' technology.

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Laser News

Uniphase to Acquire Philips' semiconductor laser business

UNIPHASE Corp has signed a letter of intent to acquire Philips Optoelectronics BV, an Eindhoven-based unit of the Dutch electronics giant.

Philips Optoelectronics produces high performance semiconductor lasers, photodiodes and components for telecommunications, CATV, multimedia, and printing markets. Given that final agreements and regulatory approval are reached, it is anticipated that the deal will be finalized in June, 1998.

The Philips Optoelectronics portfolio includes 1550 nm, 1310 nm and 1480 nm lasers, electroabsorption modulators, semiconductor optical amplifiers and receivers. These products fit neatly with Uniphase's existing range, which includes 980 nm semiconductor laser pumps and lithium niobate modulators

The Philips Optoelectronics unit has approximately 300 employees and will continue to operate in Eindhoven. In addition, a new 5600 m^2 semiconductor fabrication facility under construction in Eindhoven would be leased to Uniphase.

The Philips Optoelectronics research and development staff consists of approximately 50 employees, of whom 20 hold PhD degrees in disciplines related to optoelectronics. Both the tangible and intangible assets of Philips Optoelectronics, including approximately 70 US and European patents, will be included in the transaction.

"With this acquisition, Uniphase takes a major step towards achieving our goal of providing a complete solution to our customers in the telecommunications and CATV industries. These customers are seeking suppliers with broad component portfolios which can provide complete solutions for their most demanding applications,"says Kevin Kalkhoven, Uniphase Chairman and CEO.

"We also believe that Philips Optoelectronics products can provide not only near-term product revenue, but also a number of products under development could represent substantial opportunities for the future."

Philips commenced research in gallium aluminum arsenide lasers at the Philips Research Laboratories in Eindhoven in 1971. By 1978, development of semiconductor lasers for optical disk systems was underway. In 1980, Philips commenced telecommunications laser research on 1310 nm lasers, and began manufacturing these devices for commercial use in 1985.

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